



Hoopa Valley Serves as a Model for EPA's Tribal Brownfields Assessment Pilots and Grants

Tribal Pilots and Grants

Since the first EPA Brownfields Pilot was awarded to a federally recognized tribe in 1996, 27 Pilots and 9 grants, totaling more than \$5.8 million, have been awarded to help tribal communities restore brownfields to full economic viability. Although brownfields are generally perceived to be an urban problem, rural areas including many tribal reservations have their own share of these properties. In rural areas, often a single, large brownfield can dominate the landscape and have profound effects on the local environment. Because available land for development is sometimes more abundant in tribal areas, pressure to redevelop existing brownfields may not be as great. Without strong incentives, and without the required knowledge, experience, or financial resources, many tribes have had difficulty addressing the myriad of issues associated with brownfields restoration. But through Brownfields Pilots and grants, tribes are finding opportunities to convert brownfields from liabilities into opportunities.

Tribes are unique among Brownfields Pilots in that federally recognized tribes are seen as domestic, dependent nations under the protection of the United States, with sovereign powers over their members and territory. In addition, Tribal Councils often need to offer approval as a project moves through each stage of its activities. With many tribal environmental, economic development, and planning offices inexperienced in brownfields, significant time and resources may be needed to formulate plans that are feasible for both the tribe and EPA.

The Hoopa Valley Reservation in Humboldt County, California, the state's largest Indian Reservation, is serving as a model for EPA's Tribal Brownfields Pilots. With assistance from the Assessment Pilot awarded to the tribe, Hoopa Valley is transforming the 83-acre former Cal-Pac sawmill into new housing for tribal residents, an environmental training facility, and a modular manufacturing facility that creates pre-fab concrete walls for use in building hotels, condominiums, and other large-scale construction projects. The manufacturing facility and other businesses on the site (which potentially include pharmaceutical and tobacco companies that have shown interest) are expected to create as many as 150 new jobs. The Tribal California Conservation Corps is now enrolling students for the environmental training program; the training facility will occupy 20 acres of the site. Students will learn environmental conservation, forestry, fishing, and other environmental trades. Open to all Native Americans, students will earn college credits as well as assistance toward higher education. Up to 250 students will be able to attend at a time.

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JUST THE FACTS:

- Using its Assessment Pilot award, the Hoopa Valley tribe is transforming an 83-acre former sawmill site into an environmental training facility and a new manufacturing facility.
- In North Dakota, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Brownfields Pilot is preparing the site of a former state hospital for recreational and tourism reuses with assistance from EPA, the state, and other partners.
- In Arizona, the Navajo Nation Brownfields Pilot has completed three cleanups on a former particle board manufacturing and sawmill site, with help from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and EPA Region 9.

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With no remaining land in the valley available for redevelopment, restoration of the former Cal-Pac site became a very high priority for the Hoopa Valley Tribe. Environmental assessments were conducted on the site by the Brownfields Pilot using innovative, field-based sampling techniques to complete the process much faster than would be possible with lab-based methods. The assessments revealed that 20 acres of the site were fairly clean, while the remaining area contained more extensive contamination. Based on assessment findings, the tribe re-zoned the site as industrial, and as an incentive to an interested manufacturer, offered a portion of the property as part of a \$1 per year, 25-year lease. The incoming manufacturer will also take advantage of tax incentives resulting from the site's designation as a Historically Underutilized Business Zone by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration.

In addition to the unique lease agreement, Hoopa Valley's Brownfields Pilot provided other innovative incentives for developers and investors to help restore other targeted sites. As sovereign entities, tribes do not typically offer businesses the tax incentives often allowed by the state; to compensate, the Hoopa Valley Tribe adapted tribal business codes that encouraged businesses to stay in California through freedom from some state taxes and other disincentives. With the help of the Hoopa Valley Tribal Credit Department, the Tribe also established and funded a revolving loan fund to provide up to \$150,000 in low-interest cleanup loans for each business established on tribal land.

To keep the community apprised of the Cal-Pac site's status, the Hoopa Valley Tribe's radio station and newspaper were used to disseminate information about Pilot activities. In addition, a series of stakeholder meetings were held with local residents, including a kickoff workshop/ conference as the project was getting underway. This outreach and education of local residents and the resulting momentum generated toward the site's transformation led to eight single-family housing units being constructed adjacent to the Cal-Pac site, five funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and three by incoming homeowners.



A vandalized building on Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Tribal land.

Other Tribal Brownfields Assessment Pilots that have reported impressive progress include the Ely Shoshone Tribe in eastern Nevada, which has emphasized community involvement in its efforts to restore a 15-acre abandoned landfill; the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Pilot in North Dakota, which is

working to prepare the site of a former state hospital for recreational and tourism reuses, with assistance from EPA, the state, and other partners; and the Navajo Nation in Arizona, which has completed cleanup of a former particle board manufacturing and sawmill site, with help from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and EPA Region 9. Together, the 27 tribes that have received Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot grants are demonstrating to themselves and to other tribes that brownfields restoration is not only possible; it is greatly beneficial. Using a variety of approaches, including adapting new tribal business codes, unprecedented partnerships with county and state governments, innovative, field-based environmental assessments, bilingual translators, and "lessons learned" from other Pilots, these Tribal Pilots are now restoring their brownfields. For more information on any of EPA's Brownfields Assessment Pilots awarded to tribal entities, contact EPA's Office of Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment at (202) 566-2777.

CONTACTS:

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Or visit EPA's Brownfields Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



The former state hospital on Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Tribal land.